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General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Alberto Fujimori, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fujimori (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Peru is greatly pleased, Sir, at your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, especially since Peru was an active participant in Namibia's independence process, which was advanced by the United Nations. As the first speaker at this morning's meeting I am particularly pleased to congratulate you and the other officers of the General Assembly.

The arrival of the new millennium is a great historic opportunity to initiate an era of peace, progress and well-being, from which no people on Earth should be excluded. That requires a greater commitment on the part of the international community to create conditions that will enable developing nations properly to channel their own energy and potential with a view to achieving comprehensive national development.

At the height of the twentieth century, the majority of the world's peoples remain mired in the social, cultural and technological conditions of the nineteenth century — or even of earlier centuries. We shall be able truly to speak of a new era only if our aspirations for the twenty-first century and the third millennium become tangible reality for those peoples and if those peoples succeed in fulfilling their own legitimate aspirations: in other words, if a globalized world can globalize well-being and dignity.

The conversion of our economies to adapt them to globalization has social costs which we can bear provided that this process assures us a future of development and well-being, not one of additional frustrations. Such frustrations could arise if our national economies, rather than growing stronger, are weakened by economic opening based on unequal or unjust terms of trade. The reaction, which no one wishes to see, could be a return to defeated economic ideas.

In speaking of my own country, Peru, I can say that, like other peoples, it inherited a heavy burden of injustice and backwardness, but it also has an extraordinary future-looking calling that has made it possible over the past 10 years for our country to become an emerging economy.

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That future-looking calling has enabled us to defeat the totalitarian, terrorist designs of the Shining Path and of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. It was the latter group that seized the residence of the Japanese Ambassador in 1996.

The destructive capacity of such criminal activity is on the increase thanks to access to new technology, and today it threatens every region and every continent. If it is not duly stopped, it will undoubtedly become the nightmare of the twenty-first century. Both internal and external peace are essential for the coming of the new era that we are championing.

In 1998, Peru and Ecuador were at a crossroads: either to pursue the path of armed conflict, the situation typical of the entire century, which has led to the destruction of peoples; or to follow the path of peace, the only possibility for development. Peru and Ecuador chose peace. The 1998 peace agreement between Peru and Ecuador was the product of two equally important factors: the political will of two Governments taken to its ultimate conclusion; and the capacities, energy and awareness of two peoples determined to overcome old prejudices and work towards a future of development. Ecuador and Peru intend to reach the twenty-first century without the baggage of the nineteenth. Peace has opened up possibilities for the development of Peru and of Ecuador thanks to savings in resources once earmarked for defence, and it has shown again that Latin America is a mature region that rejects warlike tension.

But tranquility in our region has been disturbed by the alliance of drug trafficking and terrorism. In some cases, these criminal activities have created power sufficient to challenge States as well as to upset the world economy: illicit drug money may have infiltrated productive, commercial and even political activities. Terrorism and drug trafficking therefore represent a threat to modern society and to good governance.

In general terms, poverty, terrorism, drug trafficking and racial discrimination are the main barriers to our glimpsing the new era that as civilized peoples we propose to reach. Our task and our commitment is to overcome these obstacles with firm political will if we want this transitional period in which we live to mark the threshold of a new era for mankind.

The concepts of democracy and fairness must prevail. It is important to promote democracy within countries, but also to promote it between countries and between peoples. Democracy applies not only to the internal structure of States, but also to the international relations that will determine the fate of the world.

Human rights raised to their maximal power and highest expression are the rights of peoples, and all peoples have a right to the future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Today, we look ahead to the new millennium. And at this last General Assembly of the twentieth century, we look back on a century that taught us much of what we need to know about the promise of tomorrow. We have learned a great deal over the last one hundred years: how to produce enough food for a growing world population; how human activity affects the environment; the mysteries of the human gene. An information revolution now holds the promise of universal access to knowledge. We have learned that open markets create more wealth, that open societies are more just. We have learned how to come together, through the United Nations and other institutions, to advance common interests and values.

Yet for all our intellectual and material advances, the twentieth century has been deeply scarred by enduring human failures: by greed and lust for power, by hot-blooded hatreds and stone-cold hearts. At century's end, modern developments magnify greatly the dangers of these timeless flaws. Powerful forces still resist

reasonable efforts to put a human face on the global economy, to lift the poor, or to heal the earth's environment. Primitive claims of racial, ethnic or religious superiority, when married to advanced weaponry and terrorism, threaten to destroy the greatest potential for human development in history, even as they make a wasteland of the soul.

Therefore, we look to the future with hope, but with unanswered questions. In the new millennium, will nations be divided by ethnic and religious conflicts? Will the nation-state itself be imperiled by them, or by terrorism? Or will we keep coming closer together instead, while enjoying the normal differences that make life more interesting? In the new century, how will patriotism be defined — as faith in a dream worth living, or as fear and loathing of other people's dreams? Will we be free of the fear of weapons of mass destruction, or forced to teach our grandchildren how to survive a nuclear, chemical or biological attack? Will globalism bring shared prosperity, or will it make the desperate of the world even more desperate? Will we use science and technology to grow the economy and protect the environment, or put it all at risk in a world dominated by a struggle over natural resources?

The truth is that the twentieth century's amazing progress has not resolved these questions. But it has given us the tools to make the answers come out right — the knowledge, the resources, the institutions. Now, we must use them. If we do, we can make the millennium not just a changing of the digits, but a true changing of the times — a gateway to greater peace, prosperity and freedom. With that in mind, I offer three resolutions for the new millennium.

First, let us resolve to wage an unrelenting battle against poverty and for shared prosperity so that no part of humanity is left behind in the global economy. Globalization is not inherently divisive. While infant mortality in developing countries has been cut nearly in half since 1970, life expectancy has increased by 10 years. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, which measures a decent standard of living, a good education, a long and healthy life, the gap between rich and poor countries on this measure has actually declined.

Open trade and new technologies have been engines of this progress; they have helped hundreds of millions to see their prospects rise by marketing the fruits of their labor and creativity abroad. With proper investments in education, developing countries should be able to keep their best and brightest talent at home and to gain access to global markets for goods and services and capital.

But this promising future is far from inevitable. We are still squandering the potential of far too many. As many as 1.3 billion people still live on less than a dollar a day. More than half the population of many countries has no access to safe water. A person in South Asia is 700 times less likely to use the Internet than someone in the United States. Forty million people a year still die of hunger, almost as many as the total number killed in World War II. We must refuse to accept a future in which one part of humanity lives on the cutting edge of a new economy, while the other lives at the knife edge of survival.

What must we do? We can start by remembering that open markets advance the blessings and breakthroughs we want to spread. That is why we in the United States have worked to keep our markets open during the recent global financial crisis, though it has brought us record trade deficits. It is why we want to launch a new global trade round when the World Trade Organization meets in Seattle this fall. It is why we are working to build a trading system that strengthens the well-being of workers and consumers, protects the environment and makes competition a race to the top, not the bottom. It is why I am proud we have come together at the International Labour Organization to ban abusive child labour everywhere in the world.

We do not face a choice between trade and aid, but instead the challenge to make both work for people who need them. Aid should focus on what is known to work: credit for poor people starting businesses, keeping girls in school, meeting the needs of mothers and children. Development aid should be used for development, not to buy influence or finance donors' exports. It should go where Governments invest in their people and answer to their concerns.

We should also come to the aid of countries struggling to rise but held down by the burden of debt. The G-7 nations have adopted a plan to reduce by up to 70 per cent the outstanding debt of the world's poorest countries, freeing resources for education, health and growth.

All of us, developed and developing countries alike, should take action now to halt global climate change. What has that to do with fighting poverty? A great deal. The most vulnerable members of the human family will

be hurt first and hurt most if rising temperatures devastate agriculture, accelerate the spread of disease in tropical countries and flood island nations.

Does this mean developing countries must sacrifice growth to protect the environment? Absolutely not. Throughout history, a key to human progress has been willingness to abandon big ideas that are no longer true. One big idea that is no longer true is that the only way to build a modern economy is to use energy as we did in the industrial age. The challenge and opportunity for developing countries today is to skip the costs of the industrial age by using technologies that improve the economy and the environment at the same time.

Finally, to win the fight against poverty, we must improve health care for all people. Over the next 10 years in Africa, AIDS is expected to kill more people and orphan more children than all the wars of the twentieth century combined. Each year diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and pneumonia leave millions of children without parents and millions of parents without children. Yet for all these diseases, vaccine research is advancing too slowly, in part because the potential customers are too poor. Only 2 per cent of all global biomedical research is devoted to the major killers in the developing world.

No country can break poverty's bonds if its people are disabled by disease and its Government overwhelmed by the needs of the ill. With United Nations leadership, we have come close to eradicating polio, once the scourge of children everywhere. We are down to 5,000 reported cases worldwide. I have asked our Congress to fund a major increase to finish the job, and I ask other nations to follow suit. We have begun a comprehensive battle against the global AIDS epidemic. This year I am seeking another $100 million for prevention, counselling and care in Africa. I want to do more to get to those who need them most new drugs that prevent transmission from mothers to newborns. And today I commit the United States to a concerted effort to accelerate the development and delivery of vaccines for malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS and other diseases that disproportionately affect the developing world. Many approaches have been proposed, from tax credits to special funds for the purchase of these vaccines.

To tackle these issues, I will ask public-health experts, the chief executive officers of our pharmaceutical companies, foundation representatives and members of Congress to join me at a special White House meeting and to strengthen incentives for research and development, working with, not against, the private sector to meet our common goal.

The second resolution I hope we will make today is to strengthen the capacity of the international community to prevent and whenever possible to stop outbreaks of mass killing and displacement. This requires, as we all know, shared responsibility, like the one West African nations accepted when they acted to restore peace in Sierra Leone; the one 19 democracies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) embraced to stop ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and in Kosovo; the one that Asian and Pacific nations have now assumed in East Timor, with the strong support of the entire United Nations, including the United States.

Secretary-General Annan spoke for all of us during the Kosovo conflict, and more recently in regard to East Timor, when he said that ethnic cleansers and mass murderers can find no refuge in the United Nations, no source of comfort or justification in its Charter. We must do more to make these words real. Of course, we must approach this challenge with some considerable degree of humility. It is easy to say "never again", but much harder to make it so. Promising too much can be as cruel as caring too little.

But difficulties, dangers and costs are not an argument for doing nothing. When we are faced with deliberate, organized campaigns to murder whole peoples or expel them from their land, the care of victims is important but not enough. We should work to end the violence. Our response in every case cannot and should not be the same. Sometimes collective military force is both appropriate and feasible. Sometimes concerted economic and political pressure combined with diplomacy is a better answer, as it was in making possible the introduction of forces to East Timor. Of course, the way the international community responds will depend on the capacity of countries to act and on their perception of their national interests. NATO acted in Kosovo, for example, to stop a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing in a place where we had important interests at stake and the ability to act collectively.

The same considerations brought Nigerian troops and their partners to Sierra Leone and Australians and others to East Timor. That is proper — so long as we work together, support each other and do not abdicate our collective responsibility. I know that some are troubled that the United States and others cannot respond to every humanitarian catastrophe in the world. We

cannot do everything, everywhere. But simply because we have different interests in different parts of the world does not mean we can be indifferent to the destruction of innocents in any part of the world. That is why we have supported the efforts of Africans to resolve the deadly conflicts that have raged through parts of their continent. It is why we are working with friends in Africa to build the African Crisis Response Initiative, which has trained more than 4,000 peacekeepers from six countries. It is why we are helping establish an international coalition against genocide to bring nations together to stop the flow of money and arms to those who commit crimes against humanity.

There is also a critical need for countries emerging from conflict to build police institutions accountable to people and the law, often with the help of civilian police from other nations. We need international forces with the training to fill the gap between local police and military peacekeepers, as French, Argentine, Italian and other military police have done in Haiti and Bosnia. We will work with our partners and the United Nations to continue to ensure that such forces can deploy when they are needed.

What is the role of the United Nations of in preventing mass slaughter and dislocation? Very large. Even in Kosovo, NATO's actions followed a clear consensus, expressed in several Security Council resolutions, that the atrocities committed by Serb forces were unacceptable and that the international community had a compelling interest in seeing them end. Had we chosen to do nothing in the face of this brutality, I do not believe we would have strengthened the United Nations. Instead we would have risked discrediting everything it stands for.

By acting as we did, we helped to vindicate the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter to give the United Nations the opportunity it now has to play the central role in shaping Kosovo's future. In the real world, principles often collide and tough choices must be made. The outcome in Kosovo is hopeful.

Finally, as we enter this new era, let our third resolution be to protect our children against the possibility that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will ever be used again. The last millennium has seen constant advances in the destructive power of weaponry. In the coming millennium, this trend can continue or, if we choose, we can reverse it with global standards universally respected.

We have made more progress than many realize. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine courageously chose to give up their nuclear weapons. America and Russia have moved forward with substantial arms reductions. President Yeltsin and I agreed in June, even as we await Russian ratification of START II, to begin talks on a START III treaty that will cut our cold-war arsenals by 80 per cent from their height. Brazil has joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), capping a process that has almost totally eliminated the threat of nuclear proliferation in Latin America. We have banned chemical weapons from the Earth, though we must implement that commitment fully and gain universal coverage. One hundred and fifty-two nations have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, while India and Pakistan did test nuclear weapons last year, the international reaction proved that the global consensus against proliferation is very strong.

We need to bolster the standards to reinforce that consensus. We must reaffirm our commitment to the NPT, strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and make fast progress on a treaty to ban production of fissile materials. To keep existing stocks from the wrong hands, we should strengthen the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials. And today, again I ask our Congress to approve the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We must stop the spread of nuclear weapons, materials and expertise at the source. Since 1992, we have worked with Russia and the other nations of the former Soviet Union to do that. We are expanding that effort because challenges remain, but thus far we can say that the nightmare scenario of deadly weapons flowing unchecked across borders and of scientists selling their services en masse to the highest bidder has been avoided.

Now, we must work to deny weapons of mass destruction to those who would use them. For almost a decade, nations have stood together to keep the Iraqi regime from threatening its people and the world with such weapons. Despite all the obstacles Saddam Hussein has placed in our path, we must continue to ease the suffering of the people of Iraq. At the same time, we cannot allow the Government of Iraq to flout 40 — and I say 40 — successive United Nations Security Council resolutions and to rebuild his arsenal.

Just as important is the challenge of keeping deadly weapons away from terrorist groups. They may have

weaker capabilities than States, but they have fewer compunctions about using such weapons. The possibility that terrorists will threaten us with weapons of mass destruction can be met with neither panic nor complacency. It requires serious, deliberate, disciplined concern and effective cooperation from all of us.

There are many other challenges. Today I have spoken about just three: the need to do something about the world's poor and to put a human face on the global economy; the need to do more to prevent killing and dislocation of innocents; the need to do more to ensure that weapons of mass destruction will never be used on our children. I believe they are the most important. In meeting them, the United Nations is indispensable.

It is precisely because we are committed to the United Nations that we have worked hard to support the effective management of this body. But the United States also has a responsibility to equip the United Nations with the resources it needs to be effective. As I think most Members know, I have strongly supported the United States meeting all its financial obligations to the United Nations and I will continue to do so. We will do our very best to succeed this year.

When the cold war ended, the United States could have chosen to turn away from the opportunities and dangers of the world. Instead, we have tried to be engaged, involved and active. We know this moment of unique prosperity and power for the United States is a source of concern to many. I can only answer by saying this: In the seven years that I have been privileged to come here to speak to this body, America has tried to be a force for peace. We believe we are better off when nations resolve their differences by force of argument rather than force of arms. We have sought to help former adversaries like Russia and China become prosperous, stable members of the world community because we feel far more threatened by the potential weakness of the world's leading nations than by their strength. Instead of imposing our values on others, we have sought to promote a system of government — democracy — that empowers people to choose their own destinies according to their own values and aspirations. We have sought to keep our markets open because we believe a strong world economy benefits our own workers and businesses, as well as the people of the world who are selling to us. I hope that we have been and will continue to be good partners with the rest in the new millennium.

Not long ago, I went to a refugee camp in Macedonia. The people I met there, children and adults alike, had suffered horrible, horrible abuses, but they had never given up hope because they believed that there is an international community that stands for their dignity and their freedom. I want to make sure that, 20 or 50 or 100 years from now, people everywhere will still believe that about our United Nations. So let us resolve, in the bright dawn of the new millennium, to bring in an era in which our desire to create will overwhelm our capacity to destroy. If we do that, then, through the United Nations and far-sighted leaders, humanity finally can live up to its name.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Mr. President, I wish to express my warm congratulations to you upon your election to the presidency of this fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your unanimous election to the presidency is not only an attestation to the confidence we in Africa have in your leadership ability, but is also an affirmation of the faith the international community has in you to steer this organ successfully into the twenty-first century. You take up the helm of this body at a critical juncture, when we are here taking stock of where we stand on the eve of the new millennium.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency

Minister Didier Opertti of Uruguay, who presided over the affairs of this Assembly in a diligent and exemplary manner. We thank him for his conscientious efforts and sterling contribution.

May I also express our great appreciation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, having recognized the great opportunities and challenges ahead of us, has worked tirelessly to help us map a noble vision for the future of our Organization.

We are also witnessing another historic moment for our Organization, as we admit into our midst three new members: Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga. We welcome them to our brotherhood of nations and wish them all the best as they chart their own destinies and make their contribution within our community of nations.

On our African continent, the holding of free and fair elections in Nigeria has ushered in a democratic dispensation worthy of our attention. This transformation serves as a monument erected to inform the international community that Africa has said "No" to the institutionalization of the route map from barracks to the State House, which hitherto the military has traversed with impunity. Further, the return to peace and democracy in Liberia and Sierra Leone bears ample testimony to Africa's renewed quest for democracy, peace and stability. It is, therefore, our fervent hope that the implementation of these peace agreements will lead to the restoration of normality in the region.

In the same spirit, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) alliance intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to uphold one of the most fundamental tenets of the United Nations Charter: respect for the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Aggression, under whatever pretext, should be condemned and opposed by the United Nations. We are, therefore, encouraged by the eventual participation of the rebels in the peace process.

We wish to register our most sincere gratitude to His Excellency President Chiluba of Zambia for his untiring efforts that succeeded in bringing the rebels on board this peace process. It must be emphasized, though, that the success or failure of a peacekeeping mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be determined by the availability of both human and material resources. We are, however, worried that an inadequately funded Democratic Republic of the Congo peacekeeping operation would be a clear manifestation of Africa's increasing marginalization in the new world order. We trust, therefore, that the United Nations will now render the requisite support to sustain this achievement.

We find this an opportune moment to call upon the international community not only to put its full weight behind African peace initiatives, but also to assess and buttress the institutional and operational capacity of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. In this vein, we hail the European Union's declaration that its future engagement with the belligerents involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conflict would depend on the latter's fulfilment of their obligations as spelt out in the Lusaka ceasefire agreement.

Sadly, the gains that we registered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace process are being negated by the renewed bloodbath in Angola, where, for the second time this decade, UNITA has resumed war, disregarding the 1994 Lusaka Peace Agreement. We therefore call upon the international community to put in place effective mechanisms that tighten the embargo against UNITA, particularly in the light of the recently concluded mission of Ambassador Robert Fowler, Chairman of the Security Council sanctions committee on UNITA.

Zimbabwe hails the acceptance by Eritrea and Ethiopia of the OAU Framework Agreement to end the war in the Horn of Africa. Zimbabwe, as a member of the high-level committee that coordinated the effort to end the war between the two African States, calls upon the United Nations to undergird this successful regional peace initiative with the necessary technical and other resources to make the process irreversible and permanent.

Since its inception the United Nations has had on its agenda a concern for economic and social development. The follow-up to the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development is currently being assessed, and it has become evident that a potentially explosive social situation confronts the world today. The soaring levels of unemployment, the deteriorating standards of living, the abject poverty in most developing countries, especially on our continent, Africa, are cause for serious concern.

We note that Africa's fortunes have continued to worsen despite the continent's best efforts. Growth slowed in the majority of African countries and, at 2.6

per cent in 1998, average gross domestic product for all of Africa fell far short of the eight per cent annual growth rate envisioned by the World Bank as the level capable of significantly reducing poverty levels on the continent. Adverse factors that contribute to this decline include slower growth of the world economy, declining commodity prices, the contagious effects of the Asian financial crisis, the El Niño weather pattern, civil strife and political turmoil in several spots.

At a time when greater challenges and opportunities are emerging within the context of globalization, it is crucial that Africa's nagging vulnerabilities are highlighted and addressed. Total African export revenues fell by nearly $14 billion in 1998, to just $112 billion, an 11 per cent drop from the 1997 level, mainly due to price declines. That negative trend has continued in 1999.

We are concerned that at a time when prospects for aid effectiveness in Africa are improving significantly, official development assistance to Africa has fallen to its lowest level. Between 1993 and 1997, total aid receipts in Africa fell by nearly 13 per cent, from $21 billion to $18.7 billion. At this rate, official development assistance flows have fallen far short of the $30 billion a year that economists estimate is needed to reduce poverty in Africa.

The net rate of return on investment in African countries remains higher than in other developing countries. It was estimated at 20 to 30 per cent during 1990 to 1994, on average, as opposed to 16 to 18 per cent for all developing countries. Yet in contrast to this great potential, Africa has not been a significant beneficiary of the dramatic increase in global foreign direct investment flows.

Africa's debt is essentially non-payable and certainly unsustainable under any sensible growth-oriented macroeconomic scenario. There is an urgent need to release more resources from debt servicing to financing development and creating conditions that encourage inflows of private foreign investment. Although the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative constitutes an important mechanism for debt relief, its eligibility criteria are rather restrictive. While the need for better debt management by Africa in the future is acknowledged, any credible solution to Africa's debt problem must indeed entail substantial debt cancellation.

We in Africa are therefore fully persuaded that it is time the international community deliberates on the substance and prospects for new aid modalities which emphasize a holistic and comprehensive approach. There is need for us to share views on how best to foster a new donor-beneficiary relationship in which multi-donor programmes focus on supporting an African-driven agenda.

In our own region of southern Africa, we are at an advanced stage of setting up a trade protocol meant to maximize our earnings from trade. With a majority of our members having ratified this protocol, only a couple more remain before it is operational.

We are also keenly aware of the critical role of telecommunications as an effective vehicle for successful international trade. Accordingly, my country only recently agreed to be a subregional host for the AFRITEL, an African regional telecommunications centre. We trust that international investors will see this as positive preparedness on the part of our continent not only to attract them and their investments, but indeed to concretely ensure that they also prosper in their endeavours on our continent.

The United Nations decade for the progressive development and codification of international law is coming to a close on an important note, with the establishment of the International Criminal Court. However, the Court can be successful only if it is universally accepted. We must, therefore, lend our unwavering support to this process so that we can complete this important milestone in the history of our Organization.

As we look into the new millennium, let us aspire to have an international order that espouses the twin objectives of universal peace and security on the one hand, and an improved quality of life for all the earth's inhabitants on the other. It must be an order characterized by justice and respect for international law. Such international law must surely have the effect of restraining both regional and international belligerent countries. We should join enthusiastically in the promotion of the achievements of the decade for the development of international law.

Zimbabwe is greatly disturbed at the cataclysmic turn of events in East Timor following the self-determination referendum there. The crisis chronicled in the report of the Security Council Mission to Jakarta and Dili was most disquieting. Zimbabwe therefore welcomes the deployment of the multinational force to restore peace and security in East Timor and to facilitate the delivery

of humanitarian assistance. We sincerely hope that the Security Council will soon authorize the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force whose financial and other resource requirements are vouched for by the entire membership of this Organization.

It would be remiss of me not to mention how inequitable it is that the membership of the Security Council should remain unreflective of the vastly altered international circumstances. The need for the reform of the Security Council is no longer just a lofty ideal we strive to achieve, but a prerequisite for the very existence of this Organization. The Security Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations, is entrusted to act on behalf of the entire membership, which to date has risen to 188 countries. The stark realities of the situation in the world must be reflected not only in the sheer increase in numbers, but also in consideration of the democratic principle of equitable geographical representation and participation.

It is grossly unjust that we, the developing countries, should remain totally unrepresented in the permanent membership of a body entrusted with such power and authority. The powers and privileges that the current members of the Security Council enjoy should be extended to all new members if the Council is to be effective.

And so, as we hold the last session of the General Assembly in the current millennium, it behooves us to make one giant leap into the future, not only in terms of wise and bold decisions, but also in terms of the commitment to implement them and see them bear fruit for us and for posterity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Irigoyen *(interpretation from Spanish):* I wish first of all to express our satisfaction at your election, which has accorded you the privilege of conducting the debate at this fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express our conviction that your recognized diplomatic and political experience will lead to creative results.

I should also like to pay a tribute to the Foreign Minister of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, whose diligence at the helm of the Assembly last session not only bore witness to his professional abilities, but also confirmed the commitment of that American nation to the principles on which the United Nations is based.

Exactly three years ago, on first taking the floor here, I began by announcing that we were very close to achieving peace in my country. Today I return to this Assembly four months before my term of office expires to summarize all that has transpired during the past three years of changes, many of which Guatemalans could not imagine when we signed the peace accords on 29 December 1996.

The first and most fundamental change that has taken place has been in the hearts and minds of Guatemalans, as can be seen in the way that the former guerrillas have been brought back in from the cold and are no longer outlaws, and in the return of the refugees.

After over three decades of an internal armed conflict marked by extreme cruelty, a conflict which was, among other things, an expression of profound and deep-rooted political and ideological intolerance, all the indications were that reintegrating the former guerrillas was going to be a complicated and dangerous process. Nevertheless, against all expectations, from the moment the ceasefire took hold until the former guerrillas took part in the electoral process, reintegration has taken place in an atmosphere not only of security but also of openness and tolerance on the part of all sectors of society. I should also like to highlight here the attitude of the Guatemalan army, which involved itself fully in the negotiating process and made fundamental contributions to it and then, once the peace accords had been signed,

not only complied fully with their provisions but was also positive in its attitude towards them. By acting in accordance with the spirit of the accords and not just the letter, it encouraged reconciliation and peaceful coexistence with its former adversaries.

At the local level, both the refugees and the former guerrillas have returned to their towns and villages and today, in many of those places, development committees have been set up composed of returnees, former guerrillas, former members of the civil patrols and former members of the armed forces, all of them working together to improve the lot of their communities by striking at the roots of their problems.

Also, at the public policy level, peace has meant social investment on a scale and of a quality unprecedented in our country's history. That investment has been effected in accordance with the social ethic and the development logic of the peace accords, and have also met the specific targets set in those accords.

Thus we have gone farther than anyone has before. We have gone as far as the most remote villages and hamlets and brought them education, health services, roads, electricity and water, though we know that much remains to be done. What we have achieved so far has already shown that if we can consolidate the opening to progress which our country has made, we can quickly remedy the effects of so very many years of backwardness.

We are also investing in the infrastructure and facilities needed for production in order to improve the country's competitive position in the globalized world of today. I would say that these two fundamental aspects I have mentioned, the reintegration of the former guerrilla forces into society and social investment, contain the fundamental elements on which a new Guatemala will be based.

Inherent to the processes through which the former guerrillas have been reintegrated and the refugees have been repatriated are reconciliation, tolerance, respect for diversity and legal or otherwise agreed solutions to conflicts.

The main thrust of public investment embodies a social ethic based on the common good and a tangible effort to improve access to opportunities for the least regarded sectors. Thus both processes form the foundations for maintaining and strengthening peaceful coexistence between Guatemalans, which has been the most significant qualitative result of the peace accords of December 1996: on the one hand, a peaceful settlement to the conflicts and, on the other, increasing efforts to redress the most serious injustices and opportunities for development for all.

Nevertheless, our internal endeavours have taken place in an adverse world economic context. As in almost every other Latin American country, the economy in Guatemala is experiencing a slowdown and a financial squeeze. Together with the effects of the crises in various regions and the persistent financial speculation that is constantly chipping away at productive, job-creating investment, the prices of our main export products have plummeted while the cost of our imports, particularly oil, have gone up substantially.

The negative impact of this situation particularly affected the strata of our society who are least capable of fending for themselves. This trend which is mainly caused by external factors, has been compounded by the direct and indirect effects of hurricane Mitch, which struck our sister countries of Honduras and Nicaragua particularly hard but also brought serious destruction to our own country and seriously affected trade within the Central American region, on which we are highly dependent.

As a result, the State's efforts to boost development cannot be as successful as they might otherwise be, particularly when compared with our people's expectations. We have created investment incentives, beginning with political stability, and going on to education and training, creation of infrastructure and provision of basic services. What has been accomplished in the way of public works and public services has generated tens of thousands of jobs. The work done on the roads and highways and on the electrical grid and telecommunications has significantly expanded the main bases of our economy. As a result of all these and other endeavours, the effects in our country of the negative economic developments taking place abroad have been less severe than in our sister countries that have stopped growing or have experienced negative economic growth.

We have created a foundation that will have a positive impact on the standard of living of the people, and especially of the neediest. These beneficial results will continue if we stay the course.

For even if we must continue to swim against the current of the world economy, which is temporarily

impoverishing us, we have available internal resources and can count on ongoing processes that are likely to produce structural change, provided that the efforts made over the past four years are consolidated, sustained and continued.

The Peace Agreements are, for Guatemala, the strategic elements of a profound, comprehensive and all-embracing effort to change our country. They represent the basic guidelines for the fundamental transformations necessary to build a different Guatemala, one that is profoundly democratic and committed to the integral and sustainable development of its people.

The peace agenda is equivalent to the democratization of the country, which is conceived as a functional and participatory democracy encompassing the political and cultural domains. A functioning democracy involves reform of the State, and its participatory character is what enables it to become a social democracy, which in turn strengthens its functionality.

In this respect, I cannot fail to mention the substantial increase in opportunities for popular participation that has resulted from the establishment, as mandated in the peace agreements, of over 15 multi-sectoral commissions, as well as the measures taken to extend and complement structures for the elaboration and adoption of public policy.

Also noteworthy are the efforts that have been made to decentralize the State and strengthen local institutions with a view to a rapprochement between the Government and the people and to giving them a greater say in public affairs.

Another fundamental process consists in the efforts being made to build a multicultural, plurilingual and multi-ethnic nation. This involves extremely complex work to roll back centuries of exclusion, discrimination and racism, and it presupposes profound cultural changes towards the tolerance and respect necessary for our cultural diversity to blossom and make the many contributions it can to our national development without putting the unity of the country at risk.

It has also been essential to redefine national security and defence. This has involved re-examining principles and rethinking the public security, national defence and intelligence apparatuses. We have made progress in the establishment of a new national civil police. This is a professional body that is trained to focus on the protection and defence of the individual and collective rights of citizens and is sensitive to, and respectful of, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities.

We have also further reduced our military forces, cutting back the budget and dismantling bases and other important elements of the military infrastructure, as provided for in the Peace Agreements, with the full concurrence and participation of the army.

The progress made in various areas is a source of legitimate pride for all Guatemalans as well as for the States that, as the Group of Friends, have supported us, and in particular for the Organization, whose role as our partner has enabled us to maintain optimism and hope in the difficult task of building peace and development.

Guatemala has been able to benefit from the essence of what the Organization does best: make available its good offices and serve as a facilitator in the various phases of the management of a conflict, act as an impartial verifying agency, provide unconditional cooperation and act as a trusted partner in assisting Member States to resolve problems.

I wish to stress the paramount importance of the role that has been played in Guatemala by the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, with a view to ensuring progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreements. The United Nations presence in our country and the exercise of its advisory and verification functions with impartiality and wisdom have contributed significantly to the implementation of the various phases of the commitments in the Peace Agreements.

Our Government attaches similar importance to other initiatives that the United Nations has undertaken in support of Guatemala's society. Our country is a testing ground for a new assistance framework that aims, among other things, to impart greater consistency to the work of the various agencies of the Organization. Our own evaluation of the assistance we have received is highly positive.

The number of activities the Organization is carrying out in Guatemala is quite high and increasing. It is therefore only fair to emphasize that the various agencies have been able to mobilize a considerable amount of additional resources from external sources.

Another positive contribution of the cooperation in question is the tangible impact it has had, through both its direct effects and its catalytic function in respect of public

expenditure and the policies carried out by the Government.

I therefore wish to convey our deep appreciation to the States Members of the United Nations, which have at all times supported the efforts of the various sectors of Guatemalan society to restore peace. Their political backing has been fundamental to the success of those efforts. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretariat, and in particular to Mr. Kofi Annan, as well as to the executive organs of the various agencies of the United Nations system, which have interpreted the mandates of the Organization and have demonstrated efficiency in their execution.

Finally, we fully appreciate the value of the work of other multilateral bodies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, and in particular the Inter-American Development Bank, which has played a dual role as direct source of financial assistance and organizer of the Consultative Group for Guatemala.

The success achieved by intergovernmental bodies in connection with the Guatemalan peace process is our basic reason for reiterating our conviction that cooperation between nations is indispensable in order to achieve peace and development for our peoples. That is why Guatemala remains firmly committed to the promotion of various kinds of multicultural and multi-ethnic undertakings, not only in the framework of the United Nations but also with respect to various endeavours at the regional and hemispheric levels.

One of the boldest and most challenging initiatives is the one being undertaken by Central America to achieve the economic and political integration of the region. Like the other States that compose the Central American Integration System, Guatemala is convinced that this strategic association strengthens the region in its relations with an increasingly competitive world, and it reiterates its commitment to continue promoting actions to enhance the effectiveness of Central American integration.

For those same reasons, Guatemala wishes to express its unreserved support for the strengthening of our Organization. We are firmly convinced that the United Nations must be the principal forum responsible for maintaining world peace. That is why we welcome the Security Council's prompt response to the crisis in East Timor. We believe that United Nations involvement in such situations confirms its functions as the sole organ competent to decide on the action to be taken in cases where the principle of non-intervention needs to be interpreted with due regard to the existence of violations of international humanitarian law.

In order that such functions be performed adequately, we need an Organization that is strong and flexible, with mechanisms and procedures that are capable of responding to the challenges of new world realities. We must accordingly reflect more deeply on the ideal design structure of an Organization that must compensate for the regional imbalances of power that have arisen in the post-cold-war world. This also means that we should pursue the reform of the Secretariat and of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council.

We believe also that the United Nations should continue to deal with the greatest unfinished task of the twentieth century: wiping out world poverty. Together with the multilateral financial agencies, our Organization should play an indispensable role in ensuring that the benefits of globalization are distributed on a democratic basis, and that if we must all be exposed to the risks, we should all be entitled to enjoy the benefits.

Guatemala appreciates the Organization's contributions to promoting an international climate enabling disputes between and within States to be settled peacefully. As a State Member of the United Nations, Guatemala has always resolved all its international disputes in a peaceful manner and in accordance with international law.

We wish to reiterate to the Assembly our concern about the situation of the 22 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan whose aspirations for representation in international organizations have not been satisfied.

We welcome the new impetus that has been seen in the Middle East peace negotiations and we trust that they will lead to a comprehensive resolution of all the outstanding issues there. After so many years of conflict, the countries of the region, including a future Palestinian State, deserve to live in peace, security, harmony and prosperity.

This is the last statement that I will make to the General Assembly as the representative of my country, and I should like to conclude by reiterating my people's gratitude for the solidarity shown to us in our efforts

towards peace and development. The support which the peoples and Governments represented here have bestowed upon us, together with the strenuous work of the United Nations and its agencies, make us feel honoured, indebted and motivated.

The fruit that our peace process has manifestly borne in such a short time provides clear evidence of the validity and relevance of the system and of the fundamental, indispensable and inestimable importance of the efforts of the Guatemalan people within the country and of the unquestionable effectiveness of international friendship in the form of respectful, timely and effective cooperation in building a more democratic country and a more equitable and united world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Igor S. Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): There is no doubt that the twentieth century, which is now coming to a close, will leave a deep imprint on the history of the world. This has been an epoch of global transformation and social change, scientific discoveries and achievements. The realization of the idea of a universal world Organization, which has become the foundation uniting the entire international community, has indeed been one of the positive things about this century.

However, the twentieth century has witnessed the most severe upheavals. Millions of people have perished in the flames of world wars, revolutions and civil and ethnic conflicts. On a few occasions, humanity teetered on the brink of self-destruction, and the burden of outstanding problems it has left for the new era is a heavy one. We cannot resolve all these problems before the advent of the third millennium, but we are indeed duty bound to lay down the foundations for resolving them in the long-term and to start moving in that direction.

The most important thing we should do is to define the parameters of the world in which we are going to live. This lies at the core of the initiative put forward by the President of the Russian Federation, President Yeltsin, to develop a world concept for the twenty-first century. As a world Power and permanent member of the Security Council, Russia is fully conscious of its special role in and responsibility for world developments and stands for the establishment of a multipolar world built on a solid foundation of international law. Our country is pursuing in practice a multifaceted foreign policy with a view to establishing equitable and mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral relations with all the countries of the world and to strengthening international security and stability.

The world concept for the twenty-first century involves establishing a new culture which would aim to form a common system of values and models of behaviour. A world without wars and conflict, a world of democracy and prosperity must be the highest priority for all peoples and States. Every nation is entitled to its rightful place among other nations and to security on an equal footing in all its aspects, including in the political, military, economic and social areas.

How and through what mechanisms can this be achieved? Is there a body which can reflect the interests of all States in a balanced manner? The answer is obvious: it is the United Nations. From the outset, the United Nations Charter put the Organization at the service of all humankind. There is simply no other universal mechanism to regulate international relations.

We are fully aware of the danger posed by the threats and challenges facing our world today: the various manifestations of militant nationalism, separatism, terrorism and extremism, which know no borders. This is a common challenge which is claiming countless victims and wreaking destruction in various parts of the globe.

Aggressive separatism, which has become a growth medium for various extremist forces, has become one of the main sources of domestic conflict and regional instability. No one is immune to it. The international community and, above all, the United Nations, must decisively clamp down on any manifestations of separatism and strictly and consistently defend the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the inviolability of their borders. Outside

encouragement and support for separatist forces must be totally eradicated.

Recently, separatism has been increasingly merging with the monster of terrorism. We could even now, during this session, take a number of specific steps to stimulate practical international cooperation in combating terrorism. We must finalize the draft international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. I therefore suggest that we should develop and adopt a declaration of principles for cooperation between States on combating terrorism more vigorously. It is the States' bounden duty to protect their citizens against terrorist attacks and to prevent activities from taking place in their territory that are aimed at organizing such acts against the citizens of other countries. Russia therefore supports the initiative to convene, under United Nations auspices, a conference or a special session of the General Assembly next year on combating terrorism. Such an event would give a powerful political impetus to the struggle against terrorism at a global level.

The capabilities of the United Nations should also be used more efficiently in the fight against drug-related threats and organized crime. Only through joint efforts that are also in strict compliance with the rules of international law can we defeat this evil.

The founding fathers of the United Nations made provision for a law-based response to violations of peace and security. The international community can take also coercive measures, but this should be done in accordance with the Charter and following a decision by the Security Council. Unlawful means can only undermine rightful ends. It is from this very perspective that we assess such doctrines as that of humanitarian intervention. In general, we should take an extremely careful approach to coercive measures; what is more, we must not allow them to turn into a repressive mechanism for influencing States and peoples that are not to the liking of some.

Of course, evolution of the international situation means that it is appropriate for existing rules of international law to be developed and adapted to prevailing conditions, but this should be done through collective discussion and the adoption of appropriate decisions, not as a fait accompli and not working from scratch: it should be based on valid rules of international law. This is precisely what Russia had in mind with its initiative to consider at the Millennium Summit legal aspects of the use of force in international relations in the era of globalization. We invite all countries to a broad and open dialogue on this issue.

Much has been said in recent years about the reform of the United Nations, which is only natural. Life is an evolving process and, as times change, any system will need to be updated. What objectives future reform should pursue is another matter. In our view, reform means, first and foremost, the adoption of a package of measures to enhance the role of the United Nations in the world arena. The Organization should be ready to respond in a timely and appropriate way to the challenges that globalization presents to mankind. We must give serious thought to how to enhance the efficiency of the Security Council and how to make that principal organ of the United Nations more representative through the inclusion of influential new members, including — and this is absolutely indispensable — developing countries. This would help maintain the overall balance in the system of international relations, especially when the use of force, bypassing the Security Council, continues. It is also beyond doubt that preservation of the right of veto of permanent members is indispensable for meaningful and efficient work in the Council.

Generally speaking, the entire system of international organizations needs sensible and responsible reform. At the same time, the United Nations must remain a focal point of the international community's efforts to settle the most burning problems of the day. The issue of strengthening the authority of the United Nations after it has been seriously and painfully tested by the Balkan and Iraq crises is at the very top of the agenda at the current session of the General Assembly. First of all, we must continue strenuous efforts to restore the role of the Security Council in world affairs.

We have managed through joint efforts to bring the settlement of the Kosovo problem back within the legal and political framework of the United Nations. Now we need jointly to strive for strict and consistent implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We cannot afford to let the re-emerging political process be undermined again, since that could become a tragedy for all of Europe and could once again bring the world to the brink of catastrophe. Equally urgent is the issue of post-conflict rehabilitation in the Balkans. The United Nations has an important role to play in meeting these challenges as well.

We all should draw serious lessons from recent crises. Non-legitimate methods of exerting power only exacerbate problems and result in even greater deadlock. Developments in the Middle East, where the peace process has of late acquired a new positive impetus,

clearly exemplify the optimal alternative, that of negotiated settlement.

Also on the agenda is the issue of improving sanctions regimes, to which the international community has frequently resorted over the past decade. Sanctions are an extreme measure. They must be applied only when other means of political influence have been exhausted and when the Security Council has established the existence of a threat to peace. The Council, for its part, should be guided by clear criteria for the imposition and the lifting of sanctions, and should not permit any free interpretation of the decisions it has adopted, much less permit the use of its decisions by anyone for selfish political or economic ends. It is necessary to take very serious account of the humanitarian implications of sanctions both for the population of the States subject to such sanctions and for third countries. The punishment of entire nations, especially for an indefinite time and indiscriminately, is inadmissible.

Peacemaking is one of the key areas of United Nations activities. During the past 50 years the Organization has acquired vast practical experience in this field. Having successfully survived intense disputes and ideological battles, peacemaking has proved its vital power and importance for securing world and regional stability. The evolution of the theory and practice of present-day peacemaking confirms that there is no alternative to maintaining the central role of the United Nations in this sphere. The encouragement of peacemaking and the strengthening of its legal basis in strict conformity with the fundamental principles of the Charter should become an important component of the concept of the world in the twenty-first century. Building up and modernizing the anti-crisis capability of the United Nations is a key prerequisite for tackling these tasks successfully. The top priority here is to begin truly using the system of stand-by agreements with the United Nations.

Taking into account the limited resources of the world Organization, and given the high demand for peacekeeping operations, cooperation and division of labour between the United Nations and regional structures has become a priority. It is of fundamental importance that such cooperation should be in strict accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter and should be fully consistent with the prerogatives of the Security Council.

For Russia, the question of peacemaking cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is far from theoretical. For many years, Russian peacemakers within the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have contributed to stabilizing the situations in Abkhazia, Georgia, in Tajikistan, and in Trans-Dniestria, Moldova. This testifies to the fact that the settlement of conflicts within the framework of the CIS is a priority for Russia. As before, we do not see any reasonable alternative to political settlement of these crisis situations, for which political will, patience and commitment to one's obligations are needed. We consider it important for the United Nations to continue to play a prominent role in finding solutions in Tajikistan and in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is called upon to play a central role in ensuring European security and stability, can and should be the main United Nations peacemaking partner in Europe. When this arrangement fails to work, not only do specific European countries suffer, but providing for global and continental security becomes complicated. In a broad sense, OSCE peacemaking parameters, ranging from conflict prevention to peacekeeping operations and post-conflict rehabilitation, should be defined in a charter on European security. Russia proposes too that the charter should also reflect such principles important for the future of Europeans as ensuring the security and the foundations of the relations between European and Euro-Atlantic organizations in this area. Then the charter will indeed become a kind of political constitution for the Europe of the twenty-first century. As the Istanbul summit of the OSCE, which is expected to adopt the charter, is approaching fast, we should press ahead with the formulation of a substantive document.

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia may become an important factor for stability on the Asian continent after the new positive impetus it received at the recent Almaty Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting of the founding States. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, a venue for active dialogue on a broad spectrum of urgent international issues, is yet another example of the focus of the Asian countries on the formation of solid structures for security and cooperation on the continent.

It is necessary to enhance the potential of African regional and subregional organizations, which are acting in close cooperation with the United Nations to curb and cope with conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes emerging in Africa. It is the duty of the international

community to render every possible support to the African peoples.

While strengthening the legal and practical basis of peacemaking activities, special attention should be paid to what is commonly called the human rights dimension. This relates not only to measures to minimize human sufferings caused by armed conflicts, but also to efforts aimed at preventing humanitarian crises.

In this connection, I cannot fail to mention the unacceptable situation of countless thousands of people in the centre of Europe who, due to arbitrary actions by authorities, have found themselves deprived of their citizenship and of the right to use their native language and enjoy full rights in their State of residence. Civilized integration, rather than latent assimilation — this is the way out of the prevailing humanitarian situation in these countries. We welcome the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) aimed at eliminating violations of human rights and freedoms of the non-indigenous population of Latvia and Estonia. We hope that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will make her contribution to these efforts.

The risk of losing positive dynamics in the sphere of disarmament as a result of attempts to rely on unilateral power methods cannot but cause concern. If the political and legal fabric regulating international relations continues to disintegrate further, then trends to ensure national security through an arms race will become even stronger. Russia has consistently advocated the reduction and limitation of nuclear arsenals and strict compliance with the non-proliferation regime. For without this, ensuring strategic stability would prove impossible.

We realize the importance of early ratification of the START II Treaty and of the initiation of START III negotiations, under which Russia would be prepared, on a reciprocal basis, to agree to considerable further reduction of strategic offensive armaments. Naturally, this process will be feasible only if the existing agreements in this field, first of all the ABM Treaty, are strictly observed. We believe that the General Assembly should come out clearly in support of the preservation and observance of the ABM Treaty, which is a cornerstone of strategic stability, because unilateral actions aimed at undermining the time-tested regime established by this Treaty are fraught with extremely dangerous consequences. A collective search for political and diplomatic solutions is the alternative to military responses to the problems of proliferation. This is precisely the target of Russia's initiative concerning the global system of control over proliferation of missiles and missile technologies.

Substantive discussions on threats to international information security must also be continued within the framework and under the auspices of the United Nations. The time has come to reach, through joint efforts, a common understanding of such threats and of measures to reduce them.

The twentieth century has brought about economic globalization. All economies have become open and closely linked as a result of advances in science and technology. All these factors have provided a powerful impetus to social and economic development while creating their own specific problems. The gap between the industrial and the formerly colonial worlds has not only persisted but has begun to widen. Development assistance should remain a principal focus of future United Nations activities. Crises, primarily financial ones, have assumed an international character. We must draw the appropriate lessons and modernize the architecture of the world financial system. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should play a role here.

The expansion of human economic activities has brought about a globalization of both natural and man-made disasters, and this has become a major destabilizing global factor. The challenges related to the prevention of such disasters and the elimination of their consequences require that the most advanced technologies be used for the benefit of the world community as a whole. Why not consider, therefore, the establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a specialized international emergency agency which would assume relevant functions?

A widely known saying reads: "It is much easier to win a war than a peace." The United Nations founders won the war and laid the foundations for peace. It is our duty to win this peace and to make it comprehensive and irreversible.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. James Victor Gbeho.

Mr. Gbeho (Ghana): Mr. President, I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you and the

other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Given your vast diplomatic experience and personal attachment to the principles of the Charter, I have every hope that our deliberations under your guidance will be able to determine the necessary mechanisms for dealing with the numerous challenges facing our Organization as we move into the next century.

I also wish to express the deep sense of gratitude of my delegation to your predecessor, His Excellency Didier Opertti, who served with great distinction in the year which marked the implementation of reforms instituted by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to mould the Organization into a tool that can better fulfil the needs of Member States.

As we enter a new century, our Organization must make a realistic assessment of developments in the out-going century, especially in this last decade. Such an assessment will indicate that while global peace and security have been pursued relentlessly, they have not been easily nor fully achieved. The reasons are not hard to find.

The situation is aggravated by the multiplicity of conflicts that pervades the world, especially in Africa. Intrastate conflicts, rooted in ethnic, racial and religious intolerance, pose a threat to the security and stability of many States and regions. While we welcome the agreements to end the conflict in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the prolonged hostilities in Angola, Somalia, and lately in Kosovo, demonstrate that the international community is still grappling with serious challenges to peace and security.

In spite of such setbacks and disappointments, we must continue to maintain trust and confidence in the United Nations ability to achieve sustainable socio-economic development for Member States. But that confidence will be sustained only when the Organization is seen to be truly seeking the interest of all Member States, without exception. In this regard, Member States must give impetus to the reform process that we initiated a decade ago and maintain its dynamism. We also must accept that the core of the reform touches on the Security Council, whose decisions bind all Members of the Organization.

The Security Council must therefore not be allowed to become irrelevant. It should be reformed to ensure that it can undertake its responsibilities more effectively under the Charter. And this reform must be guided by the principles of democracy, sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical representation. In this connection, we wholly subscribe to the Non-Aligned Movement's statement on all aspects of the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council, complemented by the African position as expressed in the Harare declaration of June 1997. Africa's claim to at least two permanent seats should be adequately addressed, since Africa is the largest regional group in the Organization.

We would also like to reiterate the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement that a periodic review of the structure and functioning of the Security Council is necessary in order to ensure at all times that it responds more effectively to new challenges in international relations, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is only through a restructuring of the Council on these lines that this body can avoid selectivity in dealing with issues of international peace and security and sustainable development. The present unequal handling of the causes and management of conflicts is unacceptable since it indirectly allows some conflicts to drag on.

My delegation believes that we can succeed in our collective effort to achieve peace and prosperity in the next century if we begin to speak out boldly against some of the injustices on the international scene. We therefore reiterate our concern over the continued non-compliance with key United Nations resolutions that call for an end to the commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. It is our sincere conviction that the economic blockade of more than three decades' vintage against Cuba and the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation are a breach of international law and a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Particularly, Ghana considers the extraterritorial effect of the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation an infringement on the territorial integrity of States and an impediment to international navigation and free trade. In this regard, we are concerned that the economic blockade continues to severely aggravate the plight of Cubans, especially the vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly.

Given the United States Government's recent sensitivity to the concerns of the international community, Ghana would like to urge it to seriously consider the resumption of indirect relations with Cuba. We are convinced that such contacts will yield desired results,

especially if they take place in the context of constructive dialogue with the Cuban Government.

Another area of concern to the international community has been the lingering disagreements with the great Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. My delegation welcomes the positive events of 5 April 1999, by which the two Libyan nationals arrived in the Netherlands for trial by a Scottish court, in connection with the Lockerbie incident. We therefore can do no less than to reiterate the position of the Group of African States at the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Council of the League of Arab States that, as a matter of urgency, the Security Council should move beyond a mere suspension to a complete lifting of the sanctions imposed against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, since Libya has cooperated fully and fulfilled all the requirements of the relevant resolutions.

No issue in recent memory has frustrated the international community more than the Middle East peace process. Last year, as the world marked the fiftieth anniversary of the forcible dispossession of the Palestinian people of their lands, homes and property, the Wye River Memorandum was agreed, offering a fresh impetus and hope for progress. However, subsequent events — characterized by prevarications, recriminations and bad faith — inhibited full implementation of the Memorandum. Even more painful has been the seeming helplessness of the international community in the face of such obvious injustice.

Ghana reiterates its unwavering support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to the establishment of an independent sovereign State with Jerusalem as its capital. Happily, recent changes in the political landscape of Israel offer grounds for renewed optimism. We thus share the conviction of the Palestinian leader, Chairman Yasser Arafat, that Mr. Ehud Barak's victory has raised hopes for peace throughout the region. We commend the bold initiative taken by the Israeli leader, soon after assuming office, to resume dialogue and reach a meeting of minds with the Palestinians. The challenge ahead is enormous but not insurmountable; it will require painful compromises on sensitive issues. We urge all parties to negotiate in good faith towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Ghana is proud of its participation and record in the peacekeeping efforts of the Organization in all regions of the world. The sacrifices in material resources and the costs in human terms have not been in vain, since the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building have been critical in assuring all of us of the global tranquillity necessary for sustained development.

My delegation believes therefore that the time has come for the international community to do in Africa as much as it has done in other areas, particularly the Balkans, to guarantee peace. We have seen in the past few months the kind of resources that the world has been willing and able to mobilize in the Balkans on short notice. We do not see the same response to the tragedies of Africa. African Member States feel discriminated against when the response of the international community to conflicts on the continent continues to be muted or lukewarm.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are indispensable for the preservation of world peace. Yet the lack of commitment and political will of the nuclear weapon countries continues to impede the process of nuclear disarmament. This is demonstrated by the failure of the three Preparatory Committee sessions for the 2000 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Against this background, my delegation reiterates the warning that the parties and non-parties to the NPT alike will not continue indefinitely to abide by the Treaty while the nuclear-weapon countries continue to ignore the calls of the international community to abide by their NPT commitments and pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The proliferation of conventional weapons, notably small and light weapons, is equally of concern, since they are the tools of violence and conflict in Africa. My delegation commends all the efforts aimed at securing international cooperation and coordination in the struggle against the accumulation, proliferation and widespread use of small arms. Naturally, we welcome the recent decision taken on small arms and light weapons by the heads of State of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at their recent summit in Algiers which, among others, called on OAU member States to adopt a coordinated approach to the problems posed by the illicit trafficking, circulation and proliferation of these arms.

We also urge all friends of Africa to support the implementation of the moratorium on the import, export

and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, which aims at stemming the illicit traffic in these weapons in our subregion. My Government, in recognition of the need to address this problem and the related issue of the forced participation of children in armed conflicts, intends to jointly host with the Government of Canada a workshop aimed at building on the Mali moratorium and establishing a framework for keeping children out of conflicts. It is our hope that the support of the international community will be forthcoming when the time comes.

We are at the dawn of the new millennium, concluding a period in which the decolonization movement has brought about one of the century's signal transformations: that of more than 80 nations from colonial status to self-rule and membership of this Organization. This is a commendable achievement. Nevertheless, the goal of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism has not been realized, since 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain on the agenda of this Assembly. We reiterate our continued belief in the right of all peoples to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and call on the administering, occupying or colonial Powers to cooperate with the relevant institutions of the United Nations for the speedy determination of self-rule.

While we congratulate the United Nations and ourselves for the commendable record in bringing colonies to self-rule, we cannot hide our deep disappointment at the recent turn of events in East Timor. Since a significant number of States Members of the United Nations are the product of self-determination, our Organization has a moral and political obligation to bring East Timor to self-rule. We call on both the United Nations and the administering Power, therefore, to take all measures necessary to restore peace and tranquility so that the true wishes of the people, as clearly expressed in the recent referendum, can be respected without further delay.

If we are concerned about subjugated territories, then we cannot remain silent over the continued plight of Western Sahara. The people of that territory must exercise true self-determination and we believe that, since the Polisario Front and Morocco have accepted the Secretary-General's programme on implementation of the Settlement Plan for the referendum in the territory, then the promised referendum should be held without further delay. We call on all stakeholders to demonstrate good will and fairness by ensuring a free and fair referendum.

The phenomenon of extreme and widespread poverty in the midst of plenty in the world is a serious indictment of the conscience and political will of the international community. Compared to the social situation at the onset of this century, the next century begins with an even bleaker outlook. More and more people are living at or below the poverty line, while individual security and well-being continue to face disruptions from civil conflict and disease. Malnutrition, malaria, AIDS, diarrheal and communicable diseases continue to kill millions of people, stifling the economic potential of large segments of populations. HIV/AIDS alone has killed in the last decade more Africans than have all the conflicts and other diseases. It is a frightening thought that millions of Africa's young and productive populations will be killed by this pandemic in the next few years. What development and progress are we talking about, then, if we will have no human resource to implement them?

The continued deterioration of economic conditions in Africa poses a challenge to all of us, especially as all statistics show that the world's poor continue to wallow in abject poverty with only a dim hope of improvement in their living standards. One of the main requirements of our current session of the General Assembly is therefore to select for implementation those measures that will enable developing countries to grow out of poverty in a sustainable environment.

My delegation continues to be concerned about the deterioration of official development assistance, even though we note with gratitude the decision by three industrialized countries to increase their gross national product allocation to aid, and the steadfastness of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, which are providing more than 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. Official development assistance resources need to be increased to levels which, combined with the commitment of developing countries to deepening economic reforms, lead to early achievement of sustainability in growth, poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability.

If we must break the cycle of crises, poverty and instability, particularly in Africa, and if we must create the conditions for sustainable debt management on the continent, the creditor countries and institutions must be prepared to wipe out the debts of the countries involved in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative and begin the new millennium on a clean slate.

In this connection, we note with appreciation the recently announced decision and support of the G-7 countries in broadening, deepening and accelerating the HIPC Initiative. While we express our satisfaction, let me hasten to urge that care be taken to avoid the imposition of additional difficulties on HIPC countries in the process, such as are likely to befall HIPC gold-producing countries if the proposal to sell off some of the gold reserves of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to meet part of the cost of the expanded HIPC Initiative is followed through. Similarly, we pray all creditor countries not to present debt relief in conditionalities that would compel debtor countries to give up the relief option.

In these days of globalization and trade liberalization, the developed countries must also open their markets to goods from developing countries, including providing greater access for the latter's agricultural produce and services. The developed countries must, in addition, implement their trade obligations in the spirit that all must benefit from the trade rules. In this regard, the twin concepts of liberalization and globalization must afford developing countries economic justice in terms of markets and activities. They should not turn developing countries into perpetual consumers because of limited volume of goods and market access.

As we approach the next century, we know we cannot build the kind of future we desire without the full participation of women. Although much has been achieved in advancing the status of women through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, a lot still remains to be done. Discrimination, denial and violence against women and girls persist, embedded in cultural, traditional and religious practices around the world, despite the increasing public debate on gender issues.

Gender mainstreaming into national, regional and international policies and programmes, as well as the provision of adequate resources for implementation as spelt out in the Beijing Platform for Action, represents one of the crucial strategies for attaining gender equity and equality.

But in the final analysis, the critical step in protecting women's rights is to empower women through education and increased awareness of their rights. In this connection, let me express my delegation's appreciation for the adoption of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which, among others, recognizes the competence of CEDAW to receive and consider communications submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, under the jurisdiction of a State Party, claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention by the State Party. We are happy that after so many years, women now have an effective instrument in their hands to fight discrimination, and we urge the adoption of the draft optional protocol to the Convention.

This year, we also commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption by this Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by which all Member States pledged to promote and protect the rights of children. Despite the Convention, however, the rights of children continue to be violated through child labour, commercial sex, exploitation, early marriage and the use of children in armed conflicts. This situation indicates that mere ratification of the Convention is not enough. Children would be protected and their rights promoted only by a conscious effort on the part of Governments to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention.

The United Nations and other international organizations are justifiably preoccupied with governance because it is the basis of all progress. The United Nations must therefore play a fundamental and central role in the re-design of global governance and in global governance itself. It cannot do so, however, when it is constantly requested to do more for all people while it is being given less and less resources. It will certainly lack the institutional framework for global leadership when national leaders fail to stand up for it or its enduring values. Given the onerous responsibilities of the Organization and the expectations of the Member States, the timely, full and unconditional payment of assessed contributions would be an expression of our commitment and support as the Organization prepares to meet the emerging challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this connection, it is our firm conviction that the regular and peacekeeping budgets of the Organization should be determined solely by the General Assembly in accordance with each country's ability to pay, among other factors, as objectively evaluated within the Organization. Unilateral decisions that worsen the financial situation of the United Nations must be avoided.

We have an opportunity to draw lessons from our immediate past history and to shape a new millennium in our best image, just as the great statesmen of this century did in the aftermath of the Second World War. We would

not be true to ourselves if we sought refuge in half measures. We must use our best endeavours to build a new world for a new millennium we can be proud of. Our collective wisdom demands this. Our civilized values insist on this. We can do no less.

The President: I call on Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Halonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you upon your election as President of the General Assembly. The European Union gives you its full support and cooperation throughout this session. Your predecessor, Minister Opertti, also deserves our appreciation. I would also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the skill with which he has steered this Organization. The European Union pledges its support also to him, as well as its full commitment to the United Nations.

I should like to welcome the three new members of the United Nations, the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, into our global family.

In overall terms substantial progress has been made in human development. However, its speed and extent have been uneven. The United Nations has a primary role in the advancement of human development. Implementation can be carried out only through close cooperation among different actors: the United Nations, its Member States, its specialized agencies, international financial institutions, regional organizations and civil society.

We need an efficient and effective United Nations which has a stable financial basis and a full commitment from all its Member States. This also means the full, prompt and unconditional payment of contributions to the United Nations by all. Unilateral decisions and actions to the contrary are not allowed.

The globalization of the world economy is an unavoidable process. We see the need to put the globalization process and macroeconomic policies in closer touch with the lives of ordinary people. We consider this to be one of the challenges facing the world community on the threshold of the new millennium. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to provide intellectual leadership to ensure that the advantages of economic globalization are equally shared by the world's population. Increasing interdependence must work for people.

The nature of crises has also changed. Most of today's conflicts take place within and not between States. We face situations where there are serious democracy deficiencies and where human rights are strongly violated, in particular the rights of the minorities. In the worst cases, States with their traditional institutions have ceased to exist, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan described so well in his opening statement.

At the threshold of a new millennium, we should intensify our efforts to prevent these situations. We should start to consider how to elaborate some criteria and rules aimed at the prevention of humanitarian catastrophes or alleviation of profound human suffering.

The international community needs to develop solutions and responses to these new and unexpected challenges. The international community must play a proactive role in conflict prevention. There are several forms of action that have a useful effect in preventing conflicts. These include strengthening democracy and respect for human rights, as well as progress in economic and social development through good governance. The most important factor in conflict prevention is, however, a democratic society which is on a steady foundation and which guarantees human security in its widest possible sense. Democratic societies do not go to war with each other, and they are also internally more stable.

Every human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights are essential in the maintenance of international peace and security, economic development and social equality. The United Nations has a primary role in the promotion of universal respect for human rights. These must be further integrated in all United Nations activities. The promotion of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is central also to the activities of the European Union.

The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us of the need to advance the rights of the most vulnerable: children. The European Union welcomes the recent adoption of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour. All States should ratify the Convention as soon as possible and implement it effectively. The protection of children affected by armed

conflicts also requires constant attention. It is imperative to adopt without delay the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on involvement of children in armed conflict.

The European Union is concerned about discrimination against women. We underline the importance of the international human rights instruments designed to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. The adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women will be a historic event in this session. The European Union calls on all States to give serious consideration to ratifying it.

Trafficking in human beings violates many of the most basic human rights. Most victims of this practice are women and children. Concerted international action is required in the fight against trafficking. The European Union supports the work done to develop international standards to prevent these crimes and to punish the perpetrators. Measures must also be taken to help the victims of this type of exploitation.

Racism is a universal problem. Thus, the elimination of all forms of racial intolerance should be the responsibility of every State. We also want to underline the input by civil society and non-governmental organizations in this field.

The European Union is committed to opposing the death penalty. We call on all States that still impose the death penalty to progressively restrict the offences for which it may be used, and we insist that it be carried out according to minimum standards. As a first step, a moratorium on executions should be established. The final aim must remain the complete abolition of the death penalty. The European Union will actively pursue this matter in this session.

No doubt, sustainable development in all areas enhances crisis prevention. People are at the centre of our concerns in sustainable development.

The Buenos Aires Plan of Action sets out an ambitious and precise timetable to follow in future negotiations on the threat of climate change. However, there are still important outstanding questions, such as the Kyoto mechanisms and capacity-building of developing countries, as well as the transfer of technology. In the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, our common goal is to promote sustainable forest management worldwide. The European Union also notes the need for international coordination on oceans and seas.

The European Union is fully committed to reducing extreme poverty in developing countries. We support them in their efforts to implement the international commitments for sustainable development. International cooperation, as well as ownership by partner countries, is needed to achieve the common goals.

Relieving the unsustainable debt burden of the poorest countries requires faster relief through the programme for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. The European Union confirms its full commitment to the high-level discussion on financing for development. We expect this process to increase the political will to implement internationally agreed strategies for sustainable development.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains a cornerstone of global security. It is imperative that the four States that have not yet done so join the NPT. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As we are approaching the Conference on the CTBT to be held in October, the European Union calls upon all States to sign and ratify the Treaty.

The European Union welcomes the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As the international community moves towards the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines worldwide, the recent use of these weapons is highly deplorable. We must voice concern about the misery that anti-personnel mines continue to cause to the civilian population. The European Union continues to be the main contributor to demining programmes worldwide.

We are deeply concerned about the impact, accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons, and we have intensified our efforts to address this problem. The United Nations conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects should establish a strong programme of action for international cooperation.

Terrorism constitutes a threat to internal and international security. Therefore, the European Union reaffirms its unreserved condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and continues to support initiatives to suppress

it. We call upon all countries to sign and to ratify the international anti-terrorism conventions. We hope that the conventions on the suppression of terrorist financing and on the acts of nuclear terrorism can be adopted by the General Assembly by the end of this year. The European Union will look carefully into the proposal of Egypt and others to develop further the idea of a United Nations conference on terrorism.

As the Secretary-General has said, it would be the ultimate crime to miss the chance for peace and condemn people to the misery of war. Even the best plans for prevention can fail, and the international community has to address armed conflicts. These conflicts have human, social and environmental consequences which cannot be repaired.

The international community has a long tradition of solving crises by peacekeeping operations. Now that the nature of crises has changed, additional means are needed. Peacekeeping operations cannot meet all the requirements without increased efforts for civilian crisis management. In most crises, societies and their structures are completely destroyed.

The international community has called for repair and rehabilitation. Humanitarian assistance alone is not enough. Reconstruction of societies requires the presence of civilian police and other administrators from all fields of civil activity. In most cases it is difficult to find the right tools to cope with conflicts.

The European Union strongly emphasizes civilian crisis management. We hope that it will be more often resorted to as the principal means to manage and solve crises. We will work actively to develop further this concept. The European Union is in the process of improving its crisis management capabilities, keeping in mind that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the United Nations and the Security Council.

Regional organizations have a key role in international security. For their success, cooperation with the United Nations is essential. The European Union thanks the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen this cooperation and urges him to continue this work.

The crisis in Kosovo requires concerted efforts. The European Union supports the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). With the adoption of this resolution, the United Nations regained its relevance as far as Kosovo is concerned. We also support the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR in their efforts to ensure peace, democracy and security in Kosovo. The United Nations needs the means and cooperation of all to fulfil its mandate.

At the height of the Kosovo crisis the European Union launched the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Its aim is to address the questions of democracy, human rights, economic reconstruction and security in a comprehensive and durable manner. We would welcome the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia joining the Stability Pact as a full and equal participant and beneficiary. The current regime of Mr. Milosevic is responsible for its present isolation, and we look forward to welcoming democratic change inside Serbia. Meanwhile, we are searching for ways in which Kosovo and the Republic of Montenegro could be made beneficiaries of the Pact.

In Kosovo there is an urgent need to put an end to human suffering. We are concerned about the violence towards minorities, which has resulted in a large number of Serbs and Roma people leaving Kosovo. Urgent restoration of the rule of law is extremely important.

The Middle East remains a top priority for the common foreign and security policy of the European Union. We find it encouraging that the Middle East peace process has regained momentum and that the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have started again. Negotiations are the only way to find a just and lasting solution to this conflict. We welcome the signing of the memorandum on the implementation of the Wye River Agreement. The European Union has consistently assured the parties of its readiness to assist them in their search for peace.

All tracks of the peace process should now be activated. We urge the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli Governments to engage in direct talks. The relevant Security Council resolutions form an internationally accepted basis for peace.

It is also important to make progress on the multilateral track. Peace can, and must be, rooted in close regional cooperation. The multilateral track and the Barcelona process provide good opportunities in this regard.

The European Union warmly welcomes the result of the popular consultation of the East Timorese people on 30 August 1999. Indonesia's commitment to the full

implementation of the relevant Agreements is imperative. We are committed to seeing the people of East Timor enjoy the independence which they have freely chosen. The European Union pays tribute to the United Nations for the organization of the popular consultation and lauds the courage and extraordinary work of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in East Timor.

We condemn in the strongest terms the atrocities in East Timor. The Government of Indonesia retains a responsibility for security in the Territory.

We fully support Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) and welcome the early deployment of the multinational force. We also welcome the participation of Asian States in this force. Order, security and the rule of law must be restored immediately. The attitude of the European Union towards Indonesia will depend on the implementation of the undertakings given by the President of Indonesia. They should be implemented without delay and without conditions.

We have agreed, for a period of four months, on an embargo on the export of military equipment and other equipment which might be used for internal repression or terrorism. The European Union has also suspended its bilateral military cooperation with Indonesia.

The European Union stresses the urgent priority to remedy the grave humanitarian situation. We will provide further humanitarian assistance to those in need.

We also support the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene a special session of the Commission on Human Rights. We call for an investigative mission by the Commission.

East Timor's independence must proceed without delay, as provided for in the 5 May Agreements. The Member States of the European Union look forward to recognizing East Timor once the process towards independence is completed.

We also emphasize our desire to see a strong, democratic and united Indonesia.

The European Union continues to fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General towards a negotiated political settlement of the question of Cyprus. We urge the two leaders concerned to accept the invitation to negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General has said that the United Nations cannot rest until all of Africa is at peace. One third of sub-Saharan Africa is presently involved in armed conflicts. The victims of these conflicts are overwhelmingly civilians. The European Union strongly appeals to the parties in these and other ongoing conflicts to respect human rights and to cooperate with the humanitarian organizations. We will continue to make all efforts to provide assistance to the victims.

Concrete measures have been taken to strengthen African ownership and capacity to focus on conflict prevention and resolution. The European Union is supporting, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the capacity of African organizations in the field of conflict resolution and peacekeeping.

A stable and democratic political environment is indispensable for sustainable development. The EU welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and we look forward to its effective follow-up.

The first EU-Africa summit is scheduled to take place in April 2000. This summit is a clear signal of the close cooperation between the EU and the African countries aimed at addressing various, even delicate, political and socio-economic issues.

One of the principal objectives of the Amsterdam Treaty is to strengthen the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. To achieve this we have created new units and instruments to deal with the increasing challenges in the field of foreign policy. In accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty, we are going to consistently improve our capacity for conflict prevention and crisis management. The EU will increase its ability to contribute to international peace and security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, I should like to say a few words about the next millennium. The Millennium Assembly should give new direction to the renewal of the United Nations. The EU supports the overall theme "The United Nations in the twenty-first century", proposed by the Secretary-General. In the view of the EU, the focus should be on poverty eradication in the context of globalization.

Poverty eradication is a major challenge for the international community now that the world's population is reaching six billion, with nearly a quarter of that number still living in poverty. It is one of the greatest challenges left pending at the end of the twentieth century.

With the new millennium, we should also recognize the increased importance of civil society in the search for solutions. This is one of the cornerstones of the new era in international cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.